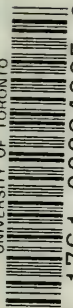


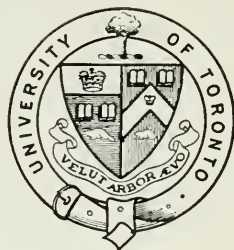
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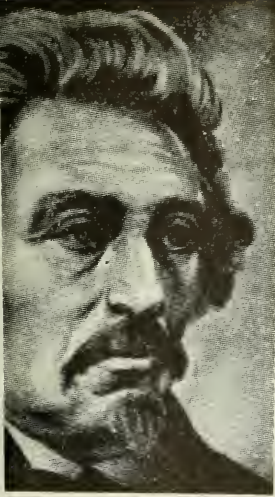
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# **MOSES HESS**

*by*

**DR. JOSEPH HELLER**

*Foreword by*

**DR. S. LEVENBERG**



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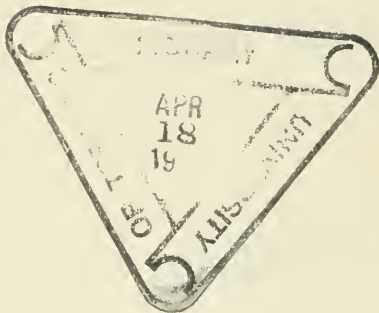
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## FOREWORD

*"Habent sua fata libelli"*

NOT ONLY BOOKS, but also people have their fate. Some men have the good fortune of being appreciated by their contemporaries; some spring into prominence after death. But there is a third category of persons whose creative genius was hardly noticed in their life-time and whose accomplishments are rarely mentioned to-day. Nevertheless, they have left a deep impact on the world of ideas.

The purpose of Dr. Heller's pamphlet is to draw attention to the personality of Moses Hess, who played a remarkable rôle in the development of the Jewish national ideology. This is not the first study of his life in the English language: short biographies were published in the past. But the present pamphlet is—to our knowledge—the first serious attempt to give a comprehensive picture, for the English reading public, of the life and the work—both in the general and the Jewish field—of Moses Hess. This is a scholarly effort written by a trained historian.

Moses Hess's achievement can be understood only in the light of the conditions of Jewish life in Western Europe during the 19th century. This was the period of Emancipation. The price for the rights of the Jewish individual was the abandonment of national aspirations and assimilation within the Gentile environment. This policy towards the Jews was formulated during the French Revolution when one of its leaders declared: "The Jews, conscious of the error of their ways, have felt the need for a fatherland; we have offered them ours." There was no question of giving the Jewish people—as a people—an equal status among the nations of the world. The ideas

of the Emancipation period were based on the following slogan: to the Jew as an individual—equal rights; to the Jews as a collective entity—nothing.

The result was that young Jews—yearning for freedom—were abandoning the faith of their fathers like a “scuttled ship.” While Moses Mendelssohn had advised combining general culture *with* the Jewish way of life, his followers found Judaism a heavy burden. They fell an easy prey to the ridicule of the Jewish beliefs among those Christians with whom they assimilated. They acquired an inferiority complex towards everything connected with Jewish life. The outside world was for them progress and liberty; Judaism—a survival of the Middle Ages and the Ghetto. A few years after Mendelssohn’s death, several of his children and grandchildren became converts to Christianity.

Moses Hess was a child of his generation. Together with many other German Jews he was a champion of assimilation. His ideal was to be accepted as a pure Aryan. He had stated in his first published work that Judaism was merely a preliminary stage for Christianity. Later—as a close collaborator of Karl Marx—he preached the idea that Judaism must give up its separate existence for the sake of humanity. If Hess had been content with this he would not have left behind many original ideas. But his was a restless and inquiring mind. The result was the first modern proclamation of the Jewish national idea. His “Rome and Jerusalem” (1862) was written before Leon Pinsker’s “Auto-Emancipation” (1882) and Theodor Herzl’s “The Jewish State” (1896); it is—from the philosophical point of view—a deeper study of the Jewish problem. Hess’s book was a challenge to the ideas of assimilation and a reaffirmation—in modern terms—of the age-old connection of the Jewish people with the Holy Land. Hess’s message can be summed up in his own words:

“After an estrangement of twenty years I am back with my people. I have come to be one of them again, to participate in the celebration of the holy days; to share the



memories and hopes of the nation, to take part in the spiritual and intellectual warfare going on within the House of Israel, and between our people and the surrounding civilised nations. . . . A thought which I believed to be forever buried in my heart has been awakened in me anew. It is the thought of my nationality, which is inseparably connected with the ancestral heritage and the memories of the Holy Land and the Eternal City—the birthplace of the belief in the divine unity of life and of the hope in the future brotherhood of man. . . .”

“Rome and Jerusalem” is not only a proud reaffirmation of the Zionist idea; it is imbued with a social pathos rooted in the belief of the Prophets in a better world and universal peace. Moses Hess was among the first champions of the modern idea of Jewish national revival, based on the ideas of social justice.

In Hess’s time assimilation was a militant ideology, whose champions included a number of brilliant men who inadvertently enriched Judaism. To-day assimilation is a passive trend of drifting away from Jewish life; a process of disintegration. In the 19th century assimilation meant a conscious act of self-abnegation. To-day many leave Jewish life often without noticing it themselves. A hundred years ago there was a vigorous struggle of ideologies within Jewry. To-day one can hardly speak of a struggle. There are a few to-day who fight for assimilation on the basis of a special philosophy of Jewish life. Nevertheless, to-day disintegration is a greater threat to the Jewish future than in the 19th century. A hundred years ago “self-liquidation” was an ideology; to-day it is an integral part of Jewish diaspora life. In the 19th century Jewish persecution was a deterrent to national suicide; to-day Jewish equality is considered by some as an encouragement to the giving-up of the Jewish way of life. The establishment of Israel had a double effect on the diaspora: it brought some Jews back to their people; it strengthened assimilationist tendencies among others.

Moses Hess's life story—published below—is not only a piece of historical research; it is a timely pamphlet dealing with one of the most acute problems of Jewish existence to-day: the Jewish national idea versus assimilation. It should be widely read, especially by those who are seeking an answer to the question: what is the place of the Jew in the modern world?

This is the first study in a new series of "Jewish Agency Publications," issued by the Department for Education and Culture—It is hoped that others will follow.

*S. Levenberg.*

# MOSES HESS

## I. THE HISTORIC BACKGROUND

### Political Scene

IN THE FIRST HALF of the 19th century Germany, divided into many small states, weakened by the Napoleonic wars and deeply stirred by the impact of the French revolution, went through a process of social transformation and political reorganisation which could not but affect the civil status and the way of life of German Jewry. The Jewish community was thrown out of its state of isolation, and the spiritual basis of its unity was shaken by the whirlwind of revolutionary ideas. The medieval pattern of corporate life, which had secured for the Jews a kind of communal self-government and a religious autonomy, was incongruent with the emergent modern form of a national State. The "fences of the Law" which, through many centuries, had safeguarded the continuity of the Jewish tradition, could not withstand the disruptive effects of social assimilation. Dissatisfied with the narrowness of Ghetto-existence and exasperated by legal disabilities which in the age of Enlightenment appeared to be an anachronistic relic of a barbarous past, many Jews found in baptism an easy way to get rid of the "misfortune of Judaism" (Heine) and to enter European society as equals. Others, inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment, pinned their hopes on the power of reason and believed in the imminent victory of humanitarianism, which would bring about liberty, equality and brotherhood of men. The protagonists of religious reform strove to do away with

the "particularistic" national features of Judaism, to adapt the teachings of the Synagogue to the principles of liberalism and to conform the requirements of the religious law to the conditions of the modern age. One of the main motives of this movement was the desire to assimilate as fully as possible with the German nation in order to prove worthy of the benefits of emancipation. The desire to attain emancipation also animated the "neo-orthodox" opponents of reform, who tried to combine adherence to the Law (Torah) with full participation in modern secular culture (Derekh Eretz=the general way of life). Yet, in the first half of the 19th century full emancipation was still far off. The spell of freedom which the Napoleonic wars brought to the German Jews was of short duration. With Napoleon's defeat a reaction set in, which lasted for more than thirty years.

In 1840 a blood libel against Jews in Damascus (the *Damascus Affair*) deeply stirred public opinion in Western Europe and America and marked the beginning of a new era in modern Jewish history. The accusation came as a painful shock to those Jews who believed the pernicious prejudices of the Dark Ages to have passed for ever. It reawakened the feeling of Jewish solidarity and prepared the ground for the Jewish national idea. Its effect was enhanced by the general course of events in Europe. The seed of democratic nationalism, sown by the French revolution, bore fruit in the national uprisings which followed the Napoleonic era and reached their climax in the upheavals of the year 1848. The struggle of small oppressed nations for their independence could not but arouse the sympathy of those Jews who had joined the ranks of the fighters for freedom and equality. Similar was the influence of modern Jewish scholarship which applied the principles of scientific research to the history of Judaism and its literature (the *Science of Judaism*). The Jewish pioneers in this field of study intended to prove to the gentile world the value

of the Jewish contribution to civilisation and the nobility of the Jewish religious and ethical ideas. They hoped that by furthering the "emancipation of the mind" they would bring nearer "civil emancipation" (Zunz). However, while it is doubtful whether their achievements in the field of Jewish studies had played an essential part in paving the way for Jewish emancipation, it is certain that their work revealed to the Jews themselves the greatness and the spiritual wealth of the Jewish past and thus created conditions which favoured the strengthening of the Jewish national consciousness.

### **Intellectual Climate**

AT THE TIME when Hess was growing and maturing, intellectual life in Germany was dominated by the conflicting trends of Enlightenment and Romanticism. As against the intellectualism of the Enlightenment, the romantics emphasised the emotional, instinctive and organic features in the development of the individual and of society. German idealistic philosophy, in its various forms, while basing itself on the fundamental concepts of the rationalistic speculative systems of the past, assimilated and made use of the leading ideas of the romantic movement. This tendency reached its climax in Hegel's system of "absolute idealism". Hegel tried, by means of the *dialectical method*, to reconcile the intellectualism of the Enlightenment with the emotionalism of the romantics. He considered the apparent opposites to be partial and mutually complementary expressions of the self-development of the highest, all-embracing rational Idea. Hegel's system failed, however, to provide a solution for the spiritual and social problems of post-Napoleonic Europe. After Hegel's death (1831) the incompatible elements of his political and religious philosophy broke up his school into a right and a left wing. David Strauss, the leader of the Left-Hegelians, who interpreted the Christian dogmas as pure myths, turned Hegel's philosophy into a kind of naturalistic

pantheism. Another disciple of Hegel's, Ludwig Feuerbach, rejected the philosophy of his master as "disguised theology", considered religion to be a delusive projection of a human ideal and fathered a type of militant materialism, which soon became predominant in Germany. At the same time, Karl Marx, while repudiating Hegel's idealism, adopted essential elements of his philosophy of history, divested the dialectical method of its idealistic garb and turned it "rightside up". He claimed to have done away with the romantic idealism of the early socialist thinkers, to have purified the socialist idea of the illusions of Utopianism and to have established a *scientific* basis for a socialist mass movement, by adapting the main motives of the Enlightenment—rationalism, utilitarianism and humanitarianism—to the requirements of the class struggle of the proletariat.

The theory of Marxism, designed to justify the struggle for the creation of an egalitarian classless society, became a powerful ferment in the life of modern Europe. Soon, however, it found a rival in the emergent democratic nationalism. In the 19th century the motives and the ideals of socialism and nationalism seemed to contradict one another. While Marxian socialism became in Western Europe a revolutionary movement, inspired by a purely rational, social and international ideal—akin to that of the early Enlightenment,—nationalism remained closely related to the ideas of the romantics. Socialism strove for a social order, which transcends geographical and racial divisions; it paid little attention to historic tradition and underestimated the importance of the national problem. The democratic national movements in the 19th century, on the other hand, drew their strength from emotional ties with particular ethnic communities and rested on an historic tradition: they shared with socialism a faith in the principles of the French Revolution, but the main-springs of their power were the feeling of ethnic kinship, the consciousness of a common destiny and the romantic

idealisation of a common past. Democratic nationalism—by its nature—could reconcile itself neither with crude naturalistic materialism, which ignores the importance of the national spirit and culture as an independent factor in history, nor with the Marxian variety of dialectical materialism, which regards economic conditions as the only decisive factor in social life. The conflict between idealism and materialism—reflected in the antagonistic theories of socialism and of democratic nationalism—became the fulcrum of Hess's intellectual endeavour. It was his desire to do justice both to the spiritual and the material aspects of reality and to combine social justice with freedom of the individual and the nation, which led Hess to the rediscovery of the social meaning of Judaism and to the elucidation of the idea of Jewish nationalism.

## II. LIFE AND WORK

### Childhood and Youth

HESS WAS BORN in Bonn (Prussia) in 1812, four years after the conquest of the town by Napoleon's army and the abolition of its Jewish Ghetto. His father, a well-to-do merchant, was an esteemed member of the Jewish community. His mother was descended from Polish Rabbis and scholars. In accordance with the then new usage, the boy was given a German name, Moritz, which he himself later changed into Moses. At the age of nine he went, together with his parents, to Cologne. There he was brought up in the house of his maternal grandfather—a pious and scholarly Jew, whose saintliness and nobility of mind strongly impressed the boy: many years later Moses Hess, the veteran fighter for socialism, remembered with deep emotion the stories and legends of the destruction of the Temple, which the "stern old man" used to read to his grandchildren. In his fourteenth year Hess

lost his mother. Four years later he entered the University of Cologne, but did not apply himself to study for any practical purpose: he assiduously read books on history, philosophy and religion and enthusiastically imbibed the spirit of radical liberalism and the romantic ideas which were in vogue in German literature. Estrangement from Judaism led to a clash between him and his father. Trying to achieve financial independence, he left his native country for England. Having failed to attain his aim there, he went to Paris, where he lived for some time in great exigency, and finally returned on foot to Germany. As a result of a reconciliation with his father he found employment as a clerk in his father's business in Cologne. This occupation proved, however, contrary to his interests and ambitions: he despised the "shopkeeper spirit" which—as he felt—stifled his mind. Another conflict with his father brought his business career to an end. After that he devoted himself to journalistic and political work. In spite of hardships and privations he found time to acquaint himself with the main currents of political thought and the leading philosophical schools of his time. In Spinozism he discovered a philosophy congenial to his mind: the true monistic point of view, which overcomes the dualism of matter and spirit without degrading any of these two aspects of reality and which could be used as a basis for the solution of the moral and social problems.

### **"The Sacred History of Mankind"**

IN EIGHTEEN-THIRTY-SEVEN Hess published his first book: "The Sacred History of Mankind—by a disciple of Spinoza." The work is permeated by a messianic spirit. The author surveys the history of mankind from a point of view which blends together theology, ethics and politics. Assuming—with Spinoza—the fundamental unity and co-ordination of matter and spirit, he views history as a process in which material causes and moral ideas work in concord towards a common aim: as a continuous striving



of mankind towards the realisation of unity in all spheres of life. This ideal manifests itself in economic harmony, social equality and spiritual freedom of the individual. The bond of ultimate unity of mankind will be a universal religion of love and brotherhood, based on the knowledge of the unity of God. On the way to its ultimate goal Humanity passes through three main epochs, which Hess describes under the symbolic headings: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. He divides the three epochs into fourteen periods, each of them characterised by the spiritual leadership of a great personality. The founder of Christianity is the predominant personality of the first epoch: the basic idea of Christianity, on which medieval civilisation was founded, is the unity of *Nature and Spirit*. Spinoza, the other great son of the Jewish people, ushers in the second epoch, that of modern civilisation, which emphasised the idea of the unity of *God and Nature*. The third epoch belongs to the future: it is the messianic age, in which the unity of *God and the Spirit* will manifest itself in the life of mankind.

The Christian terminology, of which Hess makes frequent use, cannot disguise the Jewish idea which is the central motive of the work. Like many writers of the romantic period, Hess toyed with Christian theological concepts, applying them in an allegorical—ethical and philosophical—sense, without accepting their dogmatic essence. At the same time he repudiated the authority of the Jewish religious Law and denied any future for Judaism as a living religion. When he wrote the *Sacred History* Judaism seemed to him—as he later regretfully mentions—“buried for ever in his heart”. It was to him at that time nothing but a prelude to Christianity; yet Christianity itself was to him a preliminary to the future universal religion of a pantheistic type, which was to revive the *basic idea* of Judaism in a new form, acceptable to all men.

Hess thought that Israel, having played a vital part in

the history of Man, had ceased to exist as a living nation in order that its legacy might become a fertilising force in the spiritual life of a new Humanity. "The people of God was dissolved in order that out of its death another, higher type of life might emerge. The Law of Moses contained an eternal element of truth: it united the inner life of Man with the outward form of his life. This law did not make any difference between religion and politics, between the duties towards God and the duties towards Caesar: it was the seed and the prototype of the future sacred constitution of mankind." Hess speaks of "that old, holy people's State that was destroyed long ago, but lives now in the heart of its scattered members. . . . That people was called upon from the beginning to conquer the world: not like pagan Rome by the power of its arm, but by the internal virtue of its *spirit*. It has wandered like a ghost all over the world which it conquered, and its enemies have been unable to destroy it, because the spirit is unassailable. This spirit has permeated the world, and the world is yearning for the birth of a fundamental law, which would be worthy of its mother—the ancient Law. A new sacred constitution is bound to emerge: the ancient Law will come to life again—transformed."

### **Hess's Socialist Faith**

HESS'S EARLIER WORK was a confession of an ardent faith: the *sacred* social order will give equal justice to society and the individual, to the ideal of freedom and the ideal of equality; abolition of private property will harmonise the apparently conflicting ideals. Vagueness of the basic concepts is a common feature of the works of Hess and other early socialist thinkers, who did not clearly see the difficulties in bridging the gap between individualism and collectivism, anarchism and communism. In his book Hess describes his vision of the ideal future without defining his fundamental point of view. He does not draw a sharp dividing line between socialism and communism:

he does not even use these terms—perhaps for reasons of political security. Instead, he speaks of the new *sacred* constitution as the basis of a *sacred* people's State—unconsciously revealing the religious emotion which stimulated his thought. He wrote his book impelled by a kind of prophetic urge and did not see in his work any personal merit, but regarded it as a manifestation of the "grace of God." He says: "The spirit of the Lord was poured out upon me, as it can be poured out on any thinking human being." He was convinced that he had rediscovered the forgotten true meaning of religion: "Religion, the knowledge of God, the highest good of mankind was lost to men," he exclaims. "Should the finder be ashamed to proclaim joyfully: 'Here it is again'? Truly, my conscience refuses to submit to this kind of humility. . . . We do not hesitate to declare openly, that in so far as it was granted to us to reveal and proclaim the idea elucidated in this book, we consider ourselves to be an insignificant tool of the eternal Providence that has always made use of men living in obscurity and lowliness."

Three years after the publication of *The Sacred History* Hess married a non-Jewish German girl of bad repute, Sybille Presch by name, with whom he lived in love and happiness until his death. This open defiance of conventional morality and of the Jewish religious law widened and perpetuated the breach between Hess and his father: they never saw one another again.

### **"The European Triarchy"**

*The Sacred History of Mankind* was the first attempt in Germany to interpret history from a socialist point of view and to outline the ideal social order of the distant future. In a second volume, which appeared in 1841 under the title *The European Triarchy*, Hess deals with contemporary political reality. He was the first champion of the

idea of the unification of Europe as a means for the salvation of Western civilisation. As the first step towards this goal he proposed an alliance between the three most civilised European states: Germany, France and England. This idea, which he later took up again in his *Rome and Jerusalem*, Hess maintained for historical, psychological and philosophical reasons. He thought that, for the sake of human progress, the *speculative* genius of the Germans must co-operate with the *moral* spirit of the French and the *social* instinct of the English people. The association of these three leading nations would promote the cause of *freedom and peace*: Germany would help to attain freedom of the *spirit*; France would work for true freedom in the sphere of *morality* and England—"the lighthouse of the future"—would secure the foundations of *political* freedom, while the very existence of this powerful alliance would enhance the idea of eternal peace. Here, too, Hess sounds a messianic note: the visualised "kingdom of peace," is to him the future "kingdom of God," because religion means to him love—in the widest sense of the word. In retrospect he sees in the collapse of the Roman Empire and in the French Revolution two decisive events in the advance of mankind towards unity and universal reconciliation through love. The universal religion of love implies abolition of denominational differences—which are only of temporary importance. In our present "pre-messianic" epoch the institutions of the Church have outlived themselves and men do not need them any more. But although the modern State cannot have anything to do with the Church, this does not mean separation of the State from religion: on the contrary, Hess thinks that the State, having to concern itself with the *whole* man—as a social as well as a political being—must be bound up with religion by a bond of unity.

In *The European Triarchy* Hess vigorously opposes the metaphysical idealism of the Hegelians and sets against it his principle of "practical idealism" or "philosophy of

action." Although he still makes use of the vocabulary of Christian theology, he strongly repudiates the dualism and the otherworldliness of the Christian conception of life, which he considers to lie at the root of German idealistic philosophy. Here, too, the author shows in some of his remarks high appreciation of the faith of his fathers and of its contribution to civilisation. He describes Judaism as "the fundamental principle of the historic development of mankind." The "people of the Bible embraced the remotest past as well as the most distant future." Even now, the Jews "must exist as a goad in the body of Western humanity. They are the ferment of the Western world, predestined to impress upon it the stamp of their dynamism." However, Hess—the radical liberal and socialist—still ignores the national aspect of Judaism and its historic significance. He even agrees, in this respect, with the views of Christian theologians and thinks that the Jews, having rejected the message of the founder of Christianity, became mummified: "The curse of immutability lies on the children of Israel; they wander like a ghost in a living world, which is animated by God's spirit, and they are unable either to die or to come to life again."

### **Hess—the Socialist Thinker and Leader**

DURING THE TWO DECADES following the publication of *The European Triarchy* Hess devoted all his energies to clarifying his views on socialism and to their practical application. He took part in the ideological controversies of the Left-Hegelians, was successively attracted by the views of Strauss, Feuerbach and Marx, but ultimately dissociated himself from them, not being able to agree with their one-sided naturalism and materialism. While his aversion to the Christian "dualism" was strengthened by the radical criticism of Christianity which he found in the works of Strauss and Feuerbach, he could not adopt a purely negative attitude towards religion. On the other

hand, Max Stirner, the preacher of egoistic individualism and anarchism,\* helped him to define more sharply the difference between true freedom of the individual and amorality, as well as between socialism and anarchism. Hess remained firm in his conviction that social ethics are the foundation of social action and the real object of philosophy. In a pamphlet published in 1845 under the title *The Latest Philosophers* Hess repudiates the ethical nihilism of Bruno Bauer and Max Stirner, accusing them of having adopted the dualistic point of view of Christianity and of metaphysical idealism, divorcing the idea from reality, theory from practice, society from the individual. The abstract, purely theoretical idea of freedom, divested of its social meaning, was to him nothing but "a glorification of the animal instincts of egoism and greed." True freedom of the individual and his social function are correlated: freedom means absence of violence and of limitations from without, but it implies moral self-limitation, which a social being must impose on its own activities. Freedom is neither indetermination of the will nor moral irresponsibility, but determination of the will of the individual in accordance with his own nature, as a member of human society. An essay on the "philosophy of action" and an exposition of the fundamentals of socialist faith (a "socialist catechism") established in Germany his reputation as a socialist thinker. After 1841 he was one of the collaborators of the *Rhenish Journal*, which, owing to his contributions and to those of Karl Marx, became the main organ of the liberals in Germany. In 1842 he went to Paris as a correspondent of this paper, but a year later the Prussian Government prohibited the publication of the *Rhenish Journal*. Having returned to Cologne, Hess continued to work for the cause of socialism as a journalist and a propagandist, and the fervour of his preach-

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\*The author of the book *The Ego and his Own* (1845; in German).

ing earned him among his fellow-workers the name of the "communist Rabbi."

### **Hess and Marx**

IN EIGHTEEN-FORTY-FIVE Hess collaborated with Marx on the "German Ideology," and two years later we find him in Brussels working together with Marx, contributing to socialist publications and organising communist societies. It seemed that Hess played a notable part in influencing Marx's mind in the critical period of his transition from liberal radicalism to socialism. Soon Hess himself fell under the spell of the founder of "scientific socialism" and moved nearer to his point of view. Yet the friendship between the two men, who differed widely from each other in temperament and social outlook, was of short duration. Marx disliked the enthusiastic idealism of Hess, his essentially ethical approach to the problems of social life and the speculative, visionary trend of his mind. In the "Communist Manifesto" (1848) he describes Hess's ideas of "philosophy of action" and "true socialism" as philosophical nonsense and a "robe of speculative cobwebs, embroidered with flowers of rhetoric." The fault of Hess was, according to Marx, that he did not represent the interest of the proletariat as a class, but "the interests of human nature," of "Man in general, who exists only in the misty realm of philosophical phantasy."

### **The Return to Judaism**

WHEN THE REVOLUTION of 1848 broke out, Hess hastened back to Germany to take an active part in the struggle for freedom. After the failure of the revolution he was sentenced to death, but succeeded in escaping from Germany and wandered through Europe for several years, under the permanent threat of extradition to the Prussian Government. In 1853 he finally settled in Paris, where he

devoted himself to the study of natural science and of Judaism.

In the last years of his life Hess went through a spiritual crisis. The political reaction which set in with the suppression of the revolutionary movements in Germany and France, the rift between the liberals and the revolutionary socialists and the widening differences between the Marxian and the non-Marxian trends within the socialist movement itself were causes of frustration and reasons for re-examining the basic postulates of Hess's "philosophy of action."

Convinced that neither the abstract speculations of German idealism nor one-sided Marxian economic materialism were the right ways of social thought, and that Man is neither merely a spiritual being nor the product of material causes and economic forces, Hess hoped to find in the study of the physical and biological nature of Man the explanation of his existence as an indissoluble unity of matter and spirit. He turned away from Hegel and Marx—back to his old master Spinoza. The existence of living nations—and not only of economic groups and social classes—seemed to him to point out the way to a social theory which would take account of all, material as well as spiritual, factors of life. At the same time half-forgotten impressions of his childhood were revived in his mind. The bitter feeling of agony which—as he himself says—had been aroused in his heart, as early as in 1840, by the Damascus affair, enhanced the feeling of frustration caused by the failure of the revolutionary struggle. In the midst of his socialistic activities it had dawned upon him that "he belonged to an unfortunate, slandered, despised and dispersed people." For some time his intention to give expression to his feeling in a "cry of anguish" had been "stifled in his heart by the greater pain which the suffering of the European proletariat evoked in him." Now the fate of his nation, the uniqueness of his faith, the national and universal significance of the Jewish messianic hope appeared to him in a new



light: he saw the Jewish problem as one of the crucial problems of human history. After an estrangement of twenty years "he was again with his people." In 1862 appeared the book *Rome and Jerusalem*, an attempt to solve the "last national problem" and to show the significance of the redemption of Israel for the future of mankind. This book became the basis for many theories of modern Jewish nationalism and a classic of Zionist literature.

### **Last Years**

THE RETURN TO HIS PEOPLE and to its ancient faith did not weaken Hess's adherence to the ideal of international unity and social solidarity. He did not cease to be an active member of the socialist movement. In 1863 he went to Germany to work together with Ferdinand Lassalle, the founder of the German Social-Democratic Party. Yet before the end of the year he went back to Paris, firmly resolved never to see Germany again, although he continued to contribute to German periodicals and was associated with the Socialist International in 1867. He was disgusted by the anti-Semitic leanings and the racial prejudices of educated Germans, and disappointed with the self-humiliation of the assimilated German Jews. He believed in France—the country of the Great Revolution—and hoped that the French nation "would extend its work of redemption also to the Jewish people". At the outbreak of the Franco-German war he was exiled from Paris and found temporary refuge in Brussels, but he did not bear France a grudge. Her defeat grieved him deeply and in a pamphlet "Une nation déçue" (A Defeated Nation), written after the war, he again pleaded—as in *The European Triarchy*—for a European alliance, this time not against Russia, but against Prussianised Germany.

In the last period of his life Hess set himself the task of supplementing his social philosophy by a philosophy of

nature: he sought to re-interpret Spinoza's monism in accordance with the scientific progress in the 19th century. The fruits of his endeavour in this field are contained in the book *Dynamic Matter*, of which the first volume was published posthumously by his wife (1877). His scientific pursuits did not abate his zealous interest in Judaism and in Jewish learning, which found an outlet in various contributions to Jewish periodicals, in French and German, and in the French translation of the third and sixth volumes of Graetz's "History of the Jews" (Sinai at Gulgatha, 1867; Les Juifs d'Espagne, 1872).

The restless life of the man who was one of the first pioneers of modern socialism and of Jewish nationalism came to an end on the 6th April 1875. He was buried, according to his own wish, in the burial ground of his family at Deutz on the Rhine (near Cologne).

### **Personality**

THE MOST CONSPICUOUS trait in Hess's personality is his passionate love of truth and justice. The desire to *learn* was as strong and permanent in him as the urge to *act* for the realisation of his ideas. Thinking was to him inseparable from action, theory barren and meaningless without practice. His faithful adherence to the principle of "monism" and to the "philosophy of action" reflected the basic features of his own character. He was, in fact, neither a philosopher nor a politician—in the strict meaning of these words—but rather a preacher and a fighter. He was an idealist, who despised a purely abstract, philosophical idealism, and a revolutionary socialist, who saw the only justification of socialism in the ideal of love and freedom. A man with a fiery, revolutionary temperament and a kind loving heart, who believed in his own "prophetic" mission, he could neither reconcile himself to the quietism of the right-wing Hegelians nor agree with the militant materialism of Marx and his disciples. He had neither the analytical acumen and the critical

perspicacity of Marx, nor the creative speculative power of a great philosopher like Hegel,—yet his was an impressive, versatile and inquisitive mind which ceaselessly searched for the highest truth and strove for the ultimate issues of man's life. He eagerly and easily assimilated new ideas, but always remained faithful to his own fundamental beliefs. His devotion to the cause of humanitarianism and international socialism could not suppress in his heart the deep affection for his own people, and his love of the Jews was itself a part of his love of mankind : he saw “in every Jew the stuff of a Messiah of Righteousness and in every Jewess the suffering mother of the Messiah.”

### III. “ROME AND JERUSALEM” : THE MAIN IDEAS

#### The “Genetic Principle” of Judaism

THE WHOLE PHILOSOPHY of Hess was based on the *genetic principle*, which appeared to him to be the common ground of the monism of Spinoza and of Jewish monotheism. Having gone through the school of Hegel, Hess was able to modify Spinoza's concept of the absolute substance into a dynamic principle. To him it did not mean mainly a changeless, perfect and supreme being, but—first and foremost—an everlasting, active and originative power : “the source of infinite life, of continuous creation and inspiration.” The Jewish God is, according to Hess, the all-embracing unity which Spinoza had in view. He is the God of Nature as well as of Humanity, He is the primary cause and the ultimate aim of the development of the cosmos and of the spiritual and social progress of Man. His highest manifestation, however, is in the inspired spirit of Man, and History is therefore the pre-eminent sphere of divine revelation. Whereas the Greeks sanctified Nature, as a static, harmonious, self-

contained entity, the Jews worship God as the eternal God of history, as the origin of all becoming, whose name (in Hebrew) expresses "past, present and future." There is therefore no contradiction between the Jewish idea of God and the scientific conception of nature. Judaism is the religious expression of the genetic principle, which is also a necessary postulate of modern science: God's creative power reveals itself in the *one* absolute law, which governs life in the domains of Nature and History alike. Jewish monotheism discovered the "unity of the creative spirit in contradistinction to the multiplicity of forces. The law of God is not to be sought for in Heaven or far away in space: He reveals himself within us—in our spirit and heart. An otherworldly God, who does not manifest himself immediately as the ever-present creator and lawgiver, is not the God of the Jews, Christians and Mohammedans, and he can no more provide the religious basis for the regenerated nations than atomism and materialism, which are only the modern forms of polytheism and pantheism." The creative unity, which pervades reality in all its ever-changing forms, is neither a pure idea nor the material cause of a blind, mechanical process. Judaism believes in the rule of the Spirit *within* the world. It believes in the *moral* purpose of the universe. This ultimate purpose is the *messianic peace*, i.e. the unity of mankind through which all antagonistic forces will be reconciled in an ideal harmony, bearing testimony to the unity of God.

### **Nature and History**

THE COSMIC LAW is that of genesis and evolution, or—to use the common expression—the law of progress. The complete knowledge of this law is not possible yet, because one part of the process of evolution is not yet finished—that of social evolution. The ways of Providence are still obscure to us. We know, however, that there is no infinite,

indefinite progress—neither in the social world of Man, nor in the organic world of plants and animals whose summit is the still imperfect man. There is no complete division between the three spheres of life, as there is no gulf between the spiritual and the material aspects of life : they form different stages—or periods—within the one indivisible life of the universe, which is always young and old at once. Just as organic life surpasses the inorganic sphere of universal life, without being divorced from it, so the sphere of human—social—life immensely surpasses organic life, without being completely separated from it. The primitive human races are on the borderline between the organic and the social spheres of life : they contain the roots of social reality, just as the physical cosmos contains the roots of the organic world.

Each of the spheres of life passes through the three stages of creation and genesis, growing and maturing, completion and perfection. The inorganic and the organic spheres have already completed their cycles : the evolution of Nature has reached in both the state of consummation. We can therefore say, in the language of the Bible, that God has rested from the work of the creation of the cosmos : with the completion of the evolution of organic life and the creation of Man the *Sabbath of Nature* began. The sphere of social life is, however, still incomplete : Man has not yet attained the goal of his history. We are now living in the final period of social evolution—on the eve of the *Sabbath of History*. In the future, post-historic time, “in the end of the days,” mankind will have achieved a state of economic, social and spiritual harmony, and will enjoy the peace of the *Messianic Sabbath* which is the consummation of the whole creation.

### **Judaism and the Universal Faith**

JUDAISM IS THE ONLY RELIGION which is equally opposed to narrow-minded materialism and to other-worldly spiritualism. “In Judaism, as in love, body and spirit merge into one another. It is religion in its perfection : the

spiritual link between the creator and the creature; the infinite thread, the end of which returns to its beginning; the bridge which leads from one creation to another, from life to death and from death to life." As an essentially social and historic religion, based on the idea of genetic monism, which is the true principle of science and philosophy, Judaism is suited to serve as the ground for a universal faith.

### **Judaism and Christianity**

IT IS THE JEWISH CONCEPTION of monotheism, not the Christian one, which contains the germ of the future spiritual life. The word of God will go forth from Jerusalem—not from Rome. Judaism neither regards man as a mere product of Nature—as does Hellenism—nor deifies a single personality—as does Christianity, but it views the life of the individual as an element of social and spiritual history, which reveals a higher unity and a divine plan. "The tendency to view God in History, not only in the history of mankind, but also in the history of the cosmos and the organic world, is an essential expression of the Jewish spirit." The Christian apotheosis of a single personality had a historic justification: in order to vindicate the rights of the individual it was necessary to conceive the idea of Man in an abstract way—without any connection with family, nation and fatherland. Judaism, however, has been free from this erroneous conception: it sees the individual man in his full reality, in his natural historic and social context. "Nothing is therefore more alien to Judaism than the egoistic happiness of the isolated individual which, according to modern views, is the focal point of religion."

### **Judaism and Nationalism**

ANOTHER ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC of Judaism is its intrinsic connection with the idea of nationality. Judaism

is a spiritual power of universal historic significance, embodied in the life of a national community. Judaism gives true expression to the deeper meaning of the national idea: it transforms nationality into a means for a higher spiritual and social purpose. Judaism does not ignore the importance of racial differences as vital factors in the evolution of Man, which cause the emergence of nations on the stage of history and enhance the variety and many-sidedness of human emotional and intellectual life. Judaism, however, does not glorify race as such and does not extol it at the expense of the ideal unity of mankind and of the equality of all men as moral and social beings. Races and nations are not ends in themselves: they are the roots and the stems which bear spiritual fruit of various kinds and thus contribute—each in its own way—to the polyphonic diversity of civilisations.

Ethnic types are, according to Hess, *products of History*, just as types of plants and animals are products of Nature. "*The unity of the human genus is not a primary natural fact, but the result of historical activity*: the diversity of the primary ethnic tribes is the background, their struggle is the condition, and their harmonious co-operation its goal. Up to now the whole of history was filled with struggles of races and classes: the race struggle was the primary, the class struggle the secondary one." The unity of the human genus—as the goal of evolution—presupposes a *plan* in human history. Now—in the last stage of world history—this unifying divine plan has become manifest. It was first revealed in the Holy Scriptures of Israel, which proclaimed not only the ideal of the unity of mankind, but also the idea of the essential unity of the whole cosmic, organic and social life. The Holy Scriptures of Israel assert the unity of God—in spite of the diversity within the world, and the unity of mankind—in spite of the diversity of human races.

The Jewish people has played a pioneering part in the advance of Man towards the messianic future. Through

Judaism the history of mankind has become a holy history : a unifying process of development which began with family love and will not be finished before the whole of humanity will be one family. Thus, "the national essence of Judaism is not only compatible with humanitarianism and civilisation, but necessarily presupposes them. . . . The Jewish people has become a truly creative organ of mankind. It is a holy people, the tool of a living creator in the history of the world, the organ of a unifying holy love." In Judaism nationalism and humanitarianism have been reconciled. The Jews are "something more than followers of a religion : they are an ethnic community, a people, a historic nation. The spirit of Judaism is the spirit of the Jews : the roots of its creation—in the past, the present and the future—lie not in Heaven, but in the spirit and the heart of the people."

### **Assimilation and Religious Reform**

HAVING COME BACK to his people, Hess became a zealous and acute critic of assimilationism and of its offspring, the Reform movement. He castigates the faithlessness and cowardice of "those who are ready to give up vital parts of their Jewish inheritance for the benefits of emancipation, and deny their Jewish national distinctiveness, lacking the courage to acknowledge their solidarity with an unhappy, persecuted and divided people." Not the old-fashioned pious Jew, but "the modern liberal Jew is to be despised : the Jew who throws about beautiful phrases on humanitarianism and enlightenment in order to disguise his disloyalty to his brethren." The modern assimilationist is not only a renegade—with regard to his religion, but also a traitor—with regard to his people and his family. "Those of our brethren who, for the purpose of obtaining emancipation, endeavour to persuade themselves that modern Jews possess no national feeling any more, have really lost their heads. Emancipation cannot be the price of national betrayal, and if it were



true that Jewish emancipation is incompatible with attachment to the Jewish nation, a Jew should sacrifice the former for the sake of the latter."

The radical fault of the reformers was, in Hess's view, not their desire to adjust some particulars of the religious tradition to the needs of the age of emancipation, but their vain attempt to emancipate themselves from Jewish nationality. By doing away with the national features of Judaism the reformers eliminated from the Jewish religion its very essence. The reformers had only a negative purpose: to abolish the national basis of Judaism. They ignored the historic continuity of the Jewish tradition: "They have sucked the marrow out of Judaism; from this most magnificent phenomenon of world history they have left nothing but the shadow of a skeleton. They borrowed from an alien denomination the idea of a religious reform, which has no basis either in the conditions of the modern world, nor in the essentially national character of Judaism." Reform tended to convert Judaism into a "second Christianity, cut after a rationalistic pattern—at a time when Christianity itself was already in a state of disintegration." Imitating Christian reformers of an earlier age, the Jewish reformers tried to separate the Holy Scriptures from the later development of Judaism, by setting up the Prophetic Judaism of the Bible against the Rabbinic Judaism of the Talmud: this view is, in fact, a narrower view than that of orthodox Judaism, which regards the oral Law as complementary to the written Law, and it is in complete disagreement with history. It is also wrong to assume that Judaism and Christianity can be fused together in order to become the foundation of a purely rationalistic, lifeless creed, of which the philosophers of the 18th century and their followers dreamed. "The future religion of mankind will find its expression in many national cults—each people will create its own religious form of life, and each people will become—like the Jewish people—a people of God."

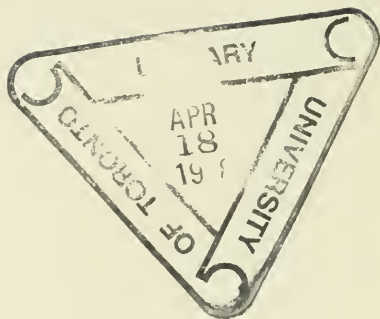
## Historic Judaism and Orthodoxy

REPULSED BY THE BARRENNESS and the assimilationist tendencies of the Reform movement, Hess was also dissatisfied with the rigid dogmatism and intolerance of the German-Jewish Neo-Orthodoxy led by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. He pinned his hopes on those parts of the Jewish people—especially of the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe—who remained faithful to the Jewish way of life. He wanted a living Judaism, which would give freedom to the mind, while preserving the spirit and the tradition of the old Synagogue, which is, fortunately, still in existence and will—as he hoped—exist until the national regeneration of world Jewry is accomplished. In spite of his heterodoxy with regard to the dogmatic aspect of religion, he was prepared not only to join a pious Jewish congregation, but would also observe in his house all festivals and fast days in order to keep alive in his own heart and in the heart of his children the traditions of the Jewish people. He thought that “Western Jewry was surrounded by a hard crust, which consists of the dead residues of the bygone products of a decaying rationalism. This crust cannot be melted by the fire of Jewish nationalism—it can be broken only by pressure from without. On the other hand, the rigid crust of orthodoxy, which stunts the progress of Eastern Jewry, will melt away when the sparks of Jewish nationalism, which smoulder under this crust, kindle it into a sacred fire, heralding the coming of the spring and the resurrection of our nation to a new life.”

## The Last Catastrophe and the Rebirth of Israel

HESS CONCLUDES his description of the spiritual situation of the Jewish people and the modern world with a prophetic vision of the future. He foresees a struggle for racial domination, which will be initiated by the reactionary rulers of Germany and will precede the birth of a

new world. We are entering a period of final racial and social conflicts leading to the "last catastrophe" on the eve of the Sabbath of history. Along with other "nurses of progress" the Jewish assimilationists will have to recognise their failure. After the last catastrophe, the approach of which is heralded by unmistakable signs of our times, Rome will have to yield its sceptre to Jerusalem: the spiritual hegemony of the eternal, holy city of Christian civilisation will pass over to the eternal, holy city of Israel, to the birthplace of both Judaism and Christianity which will also become the birthplace of a new religious civilisation. The Jewish people will find, together with other peoples, its legitimate place in universal history. As a result of Israel's national rebirth in its ancient homeland "the religious genius of the Jews will, like the legendary giant, draw new strength through touching Mother Earth, and will again be animated by the holy spirit of the Prophets."





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